



Robin Smith Peck
In the Woodlands

February 7 - 28, 2026

Essay written by Agnieszka Matejko

FADE IN: The screen is a microcosm of caribou moss and lichen covering the soft forms of fallen trees and smooth boulders. There are small footprints in the moss exiting the frame. Someone has just left.

'I grew up in a small, rural town. The woodlands surrounding us were our playgrounds. The paths we made with our footsteps wound around familiar birch and spruce, each tree with its own identity. Each small clearing in the bush became a stage for enacting the dramas of our lives, real and imagined. The stories that unfolded within these settings fueled our imaginations. The shifting light of the seasons coloured and enriched the emotional tone of our lives.'



In the Woodlands #42, 2025. Acrylic on Canvas on Birch Panel, 20" x 20"

Invitations to Imagine and Wander

*An essay on the In the Woodlands exhibition by
Robin Smith Peck*

There is nothing as wondrous, as rich in mystery and adventure, as the forest through the eyes of a child. Every rocky crevasse, every wind-swept pile of leaves, every craggy branch becomes an invitation to daydream, explore, and play.

This sense of endless possibility radiates through Robin Smith Peck's *In the Woodlands* exhibition. Growing up in Goose Bay, Labrador, she roamed the boreal forest, where the land itself was her playground. There were no paths—only landmarks she and her friends created, such as a birch tree where they left pinecone offerings and wished for things yet unspoken. The wilderness was her second home, a world alive with story and wonder, like stepping inside a fable.

Smith Peck has long sought to re-create this feeling in her artwork. But only now, after decades of practice, does she sense she has discovered a visual language that evokes “a childhood sense of belonging,” a realization that emerged as she overcame the weight of traditional landscape painting, in which the viewer remains a distant observer rather than an active participant in the scene.

In this prolific new series of over fifty works, Smith Peck draws us deep into the heart of Northern Canadian wilderness. While the wonder of childhood permeates every piece, the landscapes shift: alongside the lush undergrowth and soft caribou mosses of Labrador are the sparser, wind-swept terrains surrounding Yellowknife, where she lived for more than a decade after completing graduate studies at the University of Alberta.



In the Woodlands #44, 2025. Acrylic on Canvas on Birch Panel, 20" x 20"

‘As an artist making images of place, I often find myself creating a setting where something has happened or is about to happen. At times it’s like being a location scout for places where we can wander around in our own thoughts.

I still experience the Boreal woodlands in much the same way. Within them, I am.’

- Robin Smith Peck, 2026



In the Woodlands #2, 2025. Acrylic on Canvas on Birch Panel, 24" x 48"

Woodlands No. 23 recalls this period of her life when she could step outside the door of her trailer home and into the woods, clambering over granite outcrops, pausing to admire scrubby spruce growing from fissures in rock, and watching the slow, cyclical shift of the seasons. Rather than depicting a single moment in time, she portrays a constellation of memories based on photographs and drawings made during her long, solitary walks.

Her image resembles the autumns of our dreams: vibrant pinks and oranges of leaves intersected by blackened trunks, feel at once true-to-life and mysteriously altered. This seamless blending of photographic reality and imagination emerges from Smith Peck's digital printing process, as her prints slowly unfold through layers upon layers of pattern and texture.



In the Woodlands #23, 2025. Acrylic on Canvas on Birch Panel, 48" x 60"

Light, shadow, and mark sometimes originate in her studio, such as a fleeting pattern cast by sunlight through vertical blinds, while other elements appear by chance. In one moment of discovery, Smith Peck wiped away pools of sumi ink with a paper towel and paused, struck by the pattern left behind. She photographed it and wove it into one of the forest scenes.

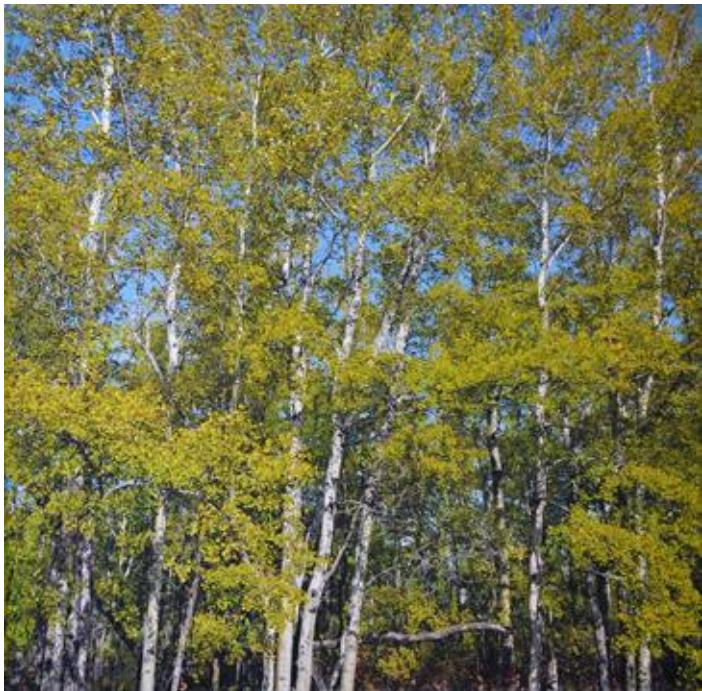
But these digital layers are only the underpainting—akin to pencil sketches beneath Renaissance paintings. The final surface is worked by hand, with acrylic washes, watercolour, and pastel scraped, dragged, and manipulated into a richly textured surface that mirrors the forest itself—dense, complex, and vibrantly alive.

The effect is immersive. Trees rise around us, their trunks close enough to touch. We move among them, sensing textures, feeling the raking northern light, and entering a world without paths. Despite the twilight and the untrammelled wilderness, there is no fear—only the freedom of a child exploring the woods, the thrill of discovery, and an exhilarating sense of belonging.

Written by Agnieszka Matejko, 2026



In the Woodlands #30, 2025. Acrylic on Canvas on Birch Panel, 30" x 60"



In the Woodlands #29, 2025. Acrylic on Canvas on Birch Panel, 36" x 36"



In the Woodlands #43, 2025. Acrylic on Canvas on Birch Panel, 20" x 20"

Publication in conjunction with the exhibition Robin Smith Peck: *In the Woodlands* by Peter Robertson Gallery from February 8th to 28th, 2026.
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Peter Robertson Gallery
10332 124 Street NW
Edmonton, Alberta T5N 1R2
www.probertsongallery.com

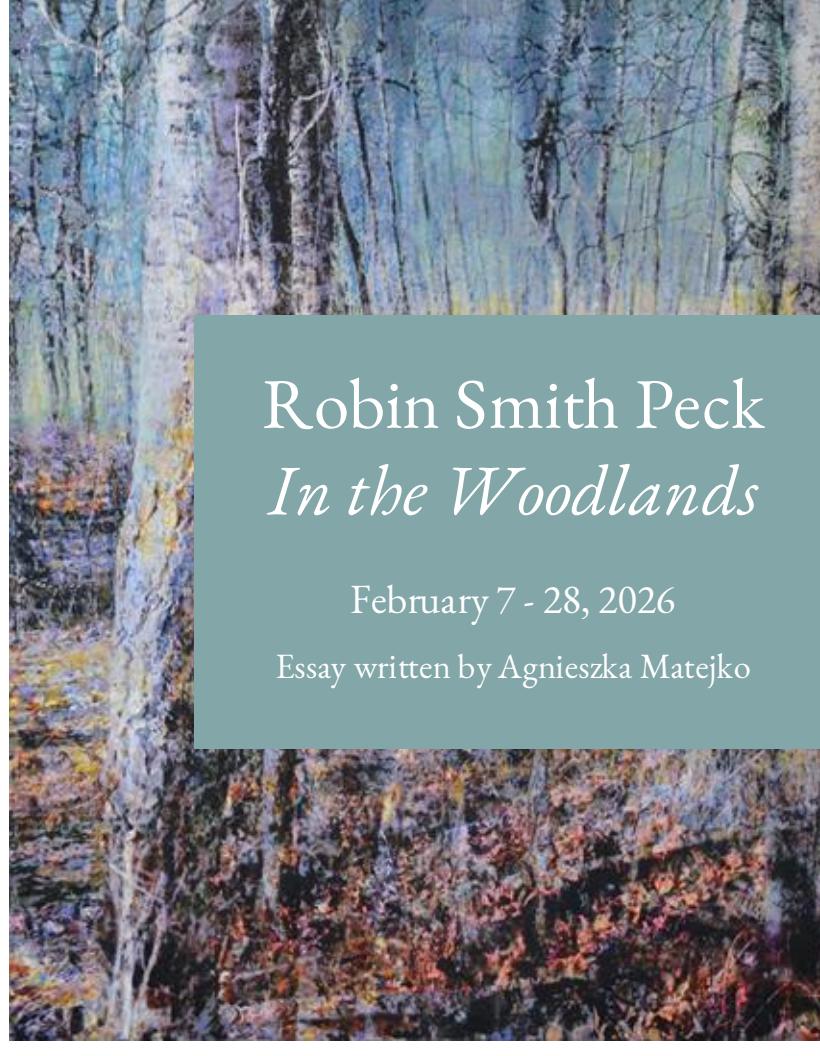
Front cover:
Robin Smith Peck
In the Woodlands #34, 2025
30" x 36"
Acrylic on Canvas on Birch Panel

Robin Smith Peck is a visual artist whose work is primarily composed using printmaking, painting and drawing. Over decades of artmaking, she has delved into themes of natural and constructed worlds, communication, architecture, and the realms of fables. Her childhood spent in the isolated northern community of Goose Bay, Labrador, and its surroundings, including a vast international military base, has informed her every step of the way. She received her BFA from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and later her MVA from the University of Alberta.

**peter
robertson
gallery**



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Peck



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